LIBRARY JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 1, 1991

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High-Tech Libraries of Tomorrow

Thom Gillespie
LJ's Computer Currents Columnist

The Growth of CD-ROM

The Politics of Public Disclosure

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LIBRARY

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Computer expert/artist/writer Thom Gillespie (the one on the left) foresees the future of computer technology in libraries. Gillespie discusses some of the "High-Tech Libraries of Tomorrow—Today" on page 46.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF REINKING

February 1, 1991

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LIBRARY MARKET OUTLOOK

BY DEBORAH SELSKY

Book Prices Continue To Rise Faster Than Inflation

Consumer spending on books seems to be relatively immune to factors that affect spending on most other items, namely consumer confidence and level of disposable income. In a similar way, book prices have a mind of their own. Aside from predicting that they will continue to increase rapidly, forecasting book prices is difficult.

Naturally, the costs of the inputs into the production process determine the ultimate price. In the book publishing industry, these inputs include, among other things, paper and ink. The hefty book price gains in the past few years were attributed to double-digit price gains in paper. Yet despite the recent decreases in the prices of paper, producer prices of books remain high. The producer price index for books increased 6.2% in the first 11 months of 1990, as compared to the previous year. This gain comes on the heels of a 6% rise in 1988 and a 6.6% increase in 1989.

General inflation lower

In contrast, general inflation now stands just above 5% at an annualized rate. The strong GNP growth of 4.5% in 1988 added pressure to prices and justified the Federal Reserve Board's fight against inflation. Because GNP growth has slowed every quarter since then, the Fed has come under increasing pressure to ease interest rates. However, its monetary policy has remained cautious, as inflation continued to rise from 4.8% in 1989 to 5.4% in 1990.

Although energy costs have caused recent price increases, inflation will begin to subside as the economy moves sluggishly into 1991 and oil prices return to pre–Kuwait invasion levels. Inflation is expected to peak at 5.6% in mid-1991 and finish the year at 5%.

Book price fluctuations

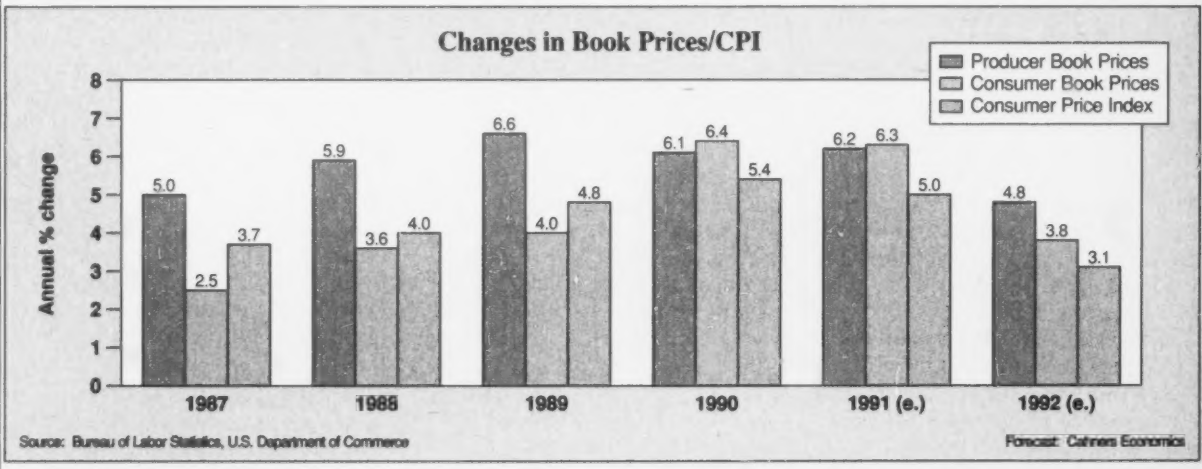
While book manufacturers have been passing along higher prices, retail outlets have not. Over the past three years, when producers' book prices increased at an average annual rate of 4.3%, consumers' prices rose only 2.5%. The rising number of discount bookstores probably contributed to this difference in price gains.

The axe falls

The hefty manufacturer price increases are finally being passed along to the consumer. Since the middle of 1990, consumer book prices began increasing at a much faster pace and are headed for a 6.4% gain for the year. With the demand for books remaining high, these increased prices should not greatly affect sales. Consumer spending on books reached an estimated $12.5 billion in 1990—9.5% higher than the previous year. Adjusting for inflation still pegs this gain at a solid 2.9%.

Over the past three years, real consumer spending on books increased an average 4.7% per year. This trend is expected to continue as the aging of the baby boom population, the increasing educational attainment levels, and the boom in export activity boost demand for books. The producer price index for books is expected to increase 6.2% in 1991 and 4.8% in 1992.

The highest producer price increases have been on textbooks. Prices of books that libraries primarily purchase—trade, professional, and reference—have seen more modest gains over the past year. Through the first 11 months of 1990, prices of professional and technical books rose 3.1% above the year before. Meanwhile, prices of trade books increased 4.2% and prices of general reference books increased 2.6%. Book buyers face more of the same in 1991 before book prices ease in 1992.



Deborah Selsky is an economist with Cahners Economics, which provides industry analyses and forecasting services for the markets its magazines serve

CALENDAR

AJL-NYMA Reference Workshop; "How To Select a Library Automation System"

FEBRUARY

11—The New York Metropolitan Area Chapter of the Association of Jewish Libraries Reference Workshop, Yeshiva University, New York. Main topic will be reference sources on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Contact: Leah Adler, 212-960-5382.

14—C. Berger and Company Workshop, Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry. "How To Select a Library Automation System." Fee: $125. Contact: Betty Burger, C. Berger and Company, PO Box 274, Wheaton, IL 60187; 708-653-1115; FAX 708-653-1691.

25-28—National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services, Park Hyatt Hotel, Washington, D.C. Theme: "Putting the Pieces Together." Guest Speaker: Arthur W. Elias, director for marketing and distribution, BIOSIS, is the 1991 G. Miles Conrad Lecturer, "The Abstracting/Information Industry—Six Views of the Future." Contact: Betty Unruh, NFAIS, 1429 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19102; 215-563-2406; FAX 215-563-2848.

MARCH

22—Public Library Association Conference, San Diego Convention Center. Program sponsored by Baker & Taylor: "Staying Ahead: Collecting Popular Materials Pre-Publication." Learn about the publishing process and its relationship to decision making in acquisition and collection development. Guest speakers: Nora Rawlinson, editor, *LJ*; Edward Kieczykowski, director, Mansfield-Richland County PL, Ohio; Chip Gibson, associate publisher, VP marketing, Crown Publishing Group; Jean Srnecz, VP of merchandising; Baker & Taylor Books. Fee: Free. Contact Mary Shapiro, 908-218-3987.

KEEPING OUR CALENDAR UP-TO-DATE

In order to make the library community aware of your conferences, seminars, meetings, and workshops, send information to *LJ* at least three months prior to the date of the event. Include all pertinent information (dates, place, speakers, contact); be sure names/places are spelled correctly. Releases are accepted by mail, ATTN: Calendar, *Library Journal*, 249 W. 17th St., New York, NY 10011; or by FAX 212-463-6890 or 212-463-6631.

23-24—The Library and Information Technology Association Regional Institute, San Diego Marriott. Theme: "The One-Person Library: Enhancing Personal Productivity with Your PC." Guest speakers: Elizabeth S. Lane, microcomputer specialist, Congressional Information Service; Mary L. Johnson, technical service manager, Orange County PL, Cal.; Patricia H. Earnest, technical services manager, Anaheim PL, Cal.; Dawn E. Talbot, information manager, University of California–San Diego; Peter Brueggeman, head, public services, Scripps Institute of Oceanography; and Kris Ecklund, reference collection coordinator, California State University–Northridge. Contact: LITA Office, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; 800-545-2433, x4270.

APRIL

24-27—Washington Library Association Conference, Inn at the Park, Spokane. Theme: "Celebrate Diversity." Guest speakers: Linda Werteimer, National Public Radio; Herb White, former dean, Indiana University, and *LJ* columnist; Fred Glazer, director, West Virginia Library Commission; Kaycee Hall, librarian, Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandise, Los Angeles; and Bill Plympton, animator of witty and satirical short films such as *Your Face* and *One of Those Days*. Contact: Mike Wirt, Conference Committee Chair, Washington Library Association, 509-924-4122.

NATIONAL/ INTERNATIONAL

American Assn. of Law Libraries: New Orleans, Jul. 21–24.

American LA: Atlanta, Jun. 29–Jul. 4.

Assn. of College and Research Libraries: Phoenix, Apr. 1–4, 1992.

Canadian LA: Montreal, Jun. 2–5.

Church and Synagogue LA: Indianapolis, Jul. 7–9.

Library and Information Technology Assn.: Denver, Sept. 13–17, 1992.

Medical LA: San Francisco, May 31–Jun. 6.

Music LA: Indianapolis, Feb. 13–16.

Natl. Information Standards Organization: Boston, Sept. 23.

Natl. Library Week: Apr. 14–20.

Public LA: San Diego, Mar. 20–23.

Special LA: San Antonio, Tex., Jun. 8–13.

White House Conference on Library and Info Svcs.: Washington, D.C., Jul. 9–13.

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